

## Message Text

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15

ACTION EA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR PINT MOPS CB

SUBJ: JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE OF PRIME MINISTER AND FANK COMMANDER-IN

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CHIEF: PART III -- QUESTION AND ANSWER

REFS: A. PHNOM PENH 15550

B. PHNOM PENH 15553

1. THE TWO REFTELS CONTAINED THE OPENING STATEMENTS OF PRIME MINISTER LONG BORET AND FANK C-IN-C LTG SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ AT THEIR NOVEMBER 21 PRESS CONFERENCE. THESE STATEMENTS WERE FOLLOWED BY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS BY THE SEVERAL ASSEMBLED JOURNALISTS IN KHMER, FRENCH AND ENGLISH, AND THE ENTIRE PERFORMANCE LASTED AN HOUR AND FORTY MINUTES. THIS TELEGRAM CONTAINS HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ENSUING QUESTION PERIOD, DURING WHICH ALL BUT AT MOST THREE QUESTIONS WERE ANSWERED BY THE PRIME MINISTER RATHER THAN BY GENERAL SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ.

2. UN VOTE. THE PRIME MINISTER, WHEN ASKED TO PREDICT THE VOTING OUTCOME, SAID THAT HIS GOVERNMENT EXPECTED THE UN TO SUPPORT IT. QUOTE. WE ARE A PEOPLE WITH RESPECT FOR LAW. I CANNOT THEN IMAGINE THAT THE UN WILL TAKE  
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THE SIDE OF THE PARTISANS OF WAR TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE

PARTISANS OF PEACE. UNQUOTE. HE WAS NOT YET READY TO ANNOUNCE WHETHER HE WOULD RETURN TO NEW YORK FOR THE UN DEBATE.

3. CORRUPTION. SEVERAL QUESTIONS, MOST NOTABLY BY AP CORRESPONDENT MATT FRANJOLA, TOUCHED ON THE PROBLEM OF CORRUPTION. PRIME MINISTER REPLIED THAT IN A COUNTRY AT WAR ONE CANNOT RESOLVE ALL PROBLEMS AT THE SAME TIME. THE PRIORITY PROBLEM IS THAT OF PEACE. ONCE THAT IS OBTAINED IT CAN SERVE AS A BASE FROM WHICH TO TACKLE THE OTHER PROBLEMS. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE PROBLEM OF CORRUPTION IS GOING TO BE SET ASIDE; HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD SEEK MEANS TO FACE IT, INSPIRED BY THE EXPERIENCES OF SUCH COUNTRIES AS SINGAPORE AND MALAYSIA. CORRUPTION EXISTED UNDER THE OLD REGIME, DEVELOPED FURTHER DURING THE WAR. TO RESOLVE IT WILL REQUIRE THE AID OF EVERYONE. IT CANNOT BE EFFECTIVELY FACED WITHOUT THE ACTIVE CONSCIENCE OF EVERYONE.

4. ECONOMIC REFORMS. ASKED FOR THE RESULTS OBTAINED BY THE ECONOMIC REFORMS OF SEPTEMBER 15, THE PRIME MINISTER REPLIED THAT ACCORDING TO EXPERTS OF THE IMF, WHO ARE POLITICALLY NEUTRAL ANALYSTS, HIS GOVERNMENT DEFINITELY HAD TO TAKE SUCH MEASURES, AND HAD BEEN EVEN A BIT LATE IN DOING SO. TO HAVE THE DESIRED STABILITY, THERE WAS STILL A NEED FOR TIME. THE SITUATION WAS BEING CLOSELY FOLLOWED, AND OTHER CORRECTIVE MEASURES MIGHT WELL BE TAKEN TO HELP BRING THIS STABILITY ABOUT.

5. U.S. ASSISTANCE. SCHANBERG (NYTIMES) AND FRANJOLA (AP) BOTH POSED QUESTIONS BASED ON PROSPECTS FOR DECLINING U.S. AID LEVELS. THE PRIME MINISTER REPLIED THAT NO ONE COULD FORESEE EXACTLY WHAT THE U.S. WOULD DO, BUT THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THE CAMBODIAN SITUATION, AND HIS GOVERNMENT HAD HOPES THAT THE CUTS WILL NOT COME OR WILL NOT BE AS SEVERE AS IN THE HYPOTHESIS POSED BY THE QUESTIONER. WHEN PRESSED AS TO WHAT CONTINGENCY PLANS HAD BEEN MADE TO FACE SUCH CUTS, HE REPLIED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD COPE WITH THE SITUATION AT THE TIME, THAT IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE  
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AT THIS TIME TO FORESEE WHAT THE REACTION WOULD HAVE TO BE.

6. DEFECTOR IM SAROEUN. ASKED ABOUT THE DEFECTION OF IM SAROEUN, MEMBER OF THE GKR UNESCO DELEGATION IN PARIS, LONG BORET ANSWERED THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO KNOW THE INNERMOST THOUGHTS OF ANYONE. HE WOULD STRESS, HOWEVER, THAT A KHMER, BE HE AN INTELLECTUAL OR NOT, WAS WORTH AS MUCH AS ANY OTHER KHMER, AND ONE COULD NOTE THAT

DURING THE PAST MONTHS THE GOVERNMENT SIDE HAD RECEIVED MORE THAN THIRTY THOUSAND KHMERS WHO HAVE FLED THE REGIONS UNDER COMMUNIST CONTROL.

7. TEACHERS AND THE SCHOOLS. ASKED WHAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS DOING TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM OF THE QUOTE CRISIS OF THE TEACHERS UNQUOTE, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE HAD HAD A MEETING LAST SATURDAY, IN THE SAME ROOM IN WHICH THE PRESS CONFERENCE WAS BEING HELD, WITH OVER 100 TEACHERS. SOLUTIONS ARE BEING SOUGHT TO THEIR PROBLEM. A RELATED QUESTION WAS WHY THE GOVERNMENT HAD FINALLY CLOSED THE LYCEE 18 MARCH WHEN THERE WAS SUCH A SHORTAGE OF SCHOOLS. THE REPLY WAS THAT AFTER THE SAD EVENTS OF WHICH EVERYONE WAS AWARE (THE ASSASSINATIONS OF DR. KEO SANGKIM, THEN MINISTER OF EDUCATION, AND A PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER IN JUNE) THE PRESIDENT AND THE GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED TO RENAME THE SCHOOL AFTER KEO SANGKIM. SINCE THEN HIS WIDOW HAD EXPRESSED THE DESIRE THAT HER HUSBAND'S NAME BE GIVEN TO A HOSPITAL, SINCE HE WAS A MEDICAL DOCTOR, AND IT WAS DECIDED THAT KEEPING THE PREMISES AS A LYCEE WOULD PROVIDE BAD MEMORIES TO FUTURE STUDENTS WHO WOULD HAVE TO WORK IN SUCH DISMAL SURROUNDINGS. SO THE LYCEE WILL BE TURNED INTO A HOSPITAL.

8. WAR PROSPECTS. FRANJOLA (AP) MADE THE POINT THAT WHILE THE KHMERS ROUGES HAVE ONLY 75,000 TROOPS, AND FANK HAS 200,000, YET THE KHMERS ROUGES MAINTAIN THE OFFENSIVE. WHAT WAS FANK DOING TO TAKE THE OFFENSIVE IN THE COMING DRY SEASON? THE PRIME MINISTER FIELDDED THIS ONE, REPLYING THAT THE GKR MUST DEFEND ITS INFRASTRUCTURE, WHICH NECESSARILY PLACED IT ON THE DEFENSIVE. IT COULD NOT ATTACK AT WILL, AS THIS WOULD MEAN KILLING TOO MANY CIVILIANS. BUT THE KHMERS ROUGES DO NOT DISTINGUISH UNCLASSIFIED

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BETWEEN ATTACKING MILITARY AND CIVILIANS.

9. MISCELLANEOUS. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID CABINET CHANGES WERE ALWAYS POSSIBLE AND NORMAL, BUT THERE WAS NO CURRENT PLAN FOR ANY. ASKED WHAT HE THOUGHT OF RUMORS OF CONTACTS HE WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE HAD WITH THE OTHER SIDE RECENTLY IN PARIS, HE REPLIED THAT PHNOM PENH HAS BECOME A CITY OF RUMORS, BUT THAT HE COULD STRESS THAT UNTIL NOW HE HAD NO SUCH CONTACTS WITH THE OTHER SIDE, IN PARIS OR ELSEWHERE. DEAN

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